

West Indies Region

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Average rainfall measured (Virgin Islands National Park Service) last season at Cruz Bay, St. John, United States Virgin Islands, was a staggering -45% for the 120-day period (August -68%, September -47%, October -35%, and November -36%). This period (-27%) fared no better, with December -28%, January -31%, and February at -21%.

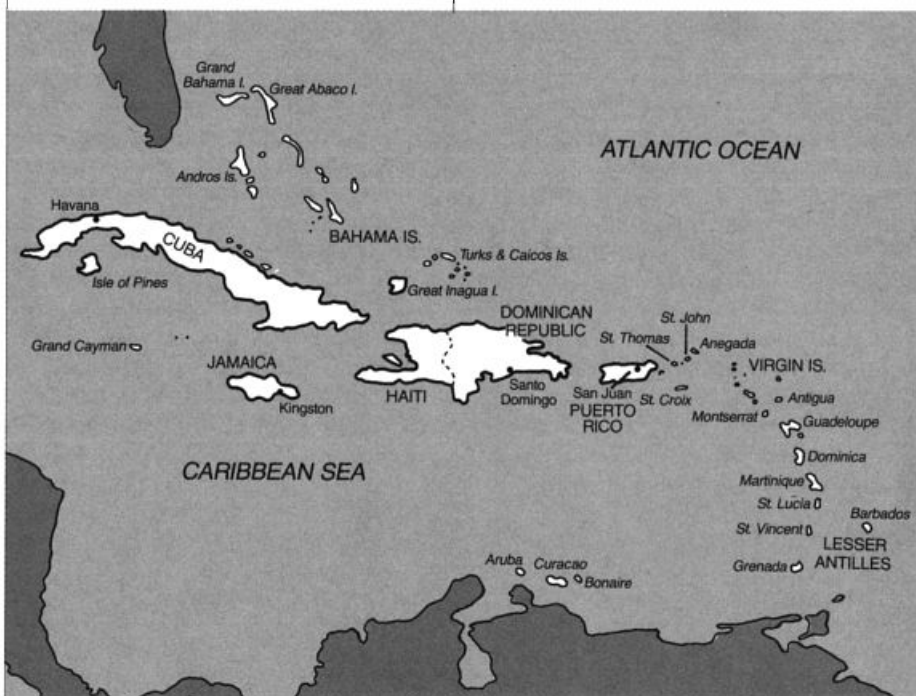
The media have been replete with weather-related disasters from Australia to South Africa. In the Caribbean Basin, serious drought conditions as early as March 1994, and a somewhat retarded hurricane season, apparently foretold recurring impacts of an El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO), at least at the latitude of Puerto Rico. From Barbados, Frost reported that strong northerly and easterly winds commencing in late November produced extraordinary records and numbers of some birds during the first week of December. These records of Holarctic species still left doubt as to their origin, e.g. western Europe or eastern North America. A recent paper (Haney and Lee, *Auk*, Vol. 111 [2]: 427-440; 1994) explaining the dynamics of temperature gradients of air masses and open ocean may shed light on the remarkable dispersal of high-latitude gulls to the West Indies. Also, six years after Hurricane Hugo, some positive results may be emerging on the eastern Puerto Rico Platform. And, the challenge (*AFN*48[5]:993) to find *Egretta garzetta* breeding in the New World has been met (*see below*).

Finally, late reports, although regrettable, still make for some fascinating reading. This entry (*Addendum*) ranks as among the most outstanding, with one hemispheric and four Regional records, three of which were photographed!

Abbreviations: Ba (*Bahamas*); Bd (*Barbados*); PR (*Puerto Rico*); StL (*St. Lucia*).

Petrels to Terns

A Wilson's Storm-Petrel was noted at sea en-route to Martinique from Puerto Rico Jan. 23 (S&GG). An Am. White Pelican was



noted (H&JC) of the coast at Guanica, PR Jan. 22, furnishing a 5th record. A moribund, imm. Masked Booby was found (MF, EM) at South Point, Bd Feb. 9 for the first specimen record for that location. A Glossy Ibis was noted (GE) at Ponce, PR Dec. 24.

SA A record seven Little Egrets were counted from 4 locations during the first week of December 1994 at Barbados (MF,EM). After these egrets were found in Graeme Hall Swamp, Bd, and Vieux Fort, StL in recent years, speculation grew to anticipation that breeding pairs might eventually be found among the Cattle and Snowy egret colony on Barbados, thereby clarifying its status in the New World. Ultimately, after searching for breeding during summer months, the first record of breeding in the Neotropics and probably the New World came from a nest located in late December which fledged three chicks in February (MF, EM). Another nest was observed (JB, CC, MF) Jan. 27. Can Western Reef-Heron be far behind?

A ♂ Eur. Wigeon, providing only the 3rd island record, was seen at East Point, Bd (MF) from Dec. 4-17; then joined by a female from Jan. 25-February at Coles St. John Parish, Bd (JB, MF). A ♀ N. Pintail seen last fall remained at Coles, Bd through February (MF, EM). An injured Masked Duck was obtained (DA) Jan. 7, but an adult seen at a St. Philip pond, Bd Jan. 15 was with three ducklings Feb. 25 for only the 2nd breeding in several years (MF, EM).

A juv. Curlew Sandpiper was noted at Congo Road, Bd Jan. 2, and a Ruff was seen at Chancery Lane, Bd Feb. 25 (MF, EM). On Jan. 26, Buecking and Cole noted six jaegers, one a Pomarine, off Soufriere, StL for perhaps the first report from that location. From Pier 3 at San Juan Harbor, PR comes an outstanding larid report (S&GG), including the Region's first unconfirmed report of Little Gull (GG), described as much smaller than cohort Laughing Gulls (15) and Royal Terns (100) resting together at Pier 3. Grief, a Canadian birder who is familiar with this gull, further detailed it as having a full hood, medium-gray back, darker gray wings, black bill, and dark legs. These field marks are consistent with early first- or 2nd-year (pre-breeding) plumage (Cramp *et al.* 1983). There were also six Ring-billed Gulls and a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Pier 3 Jan. 29 (GG). The Lesser Black-backed Gull was also seen the next day (JB, CC). A Com. Black-headed gull was reported from Congo Road, Bd from November 30 and subsequently from East Point and Oistins Bay through December (MF, EM). A Great Black-backed Gull, noted initially by Archer Dec. 8 at North Point, Bd was the first seen in several years (MF, EM).

An imm. Black Tern was present at Congo Road, Bd from early November-Jan. 2 (MF, EM). Sandwich (15) and Caspian Terns (eight) were also noted (S&CC) at Pier 3, San Juan Harbor. A Black Skimmer (ph.) seen at Alicetown, North Bimini, Ba Dec. 6 (TW) may be the first record for that island group.

Parrots to Orioles

Although LeBaron heard some Puerto Rican Parrots Dec. 26 near the lower visitor area at El Yunque, Currie did not see or hear any there in late January. Three Puerto Rican Nightjars were heard (H&JC) at Gu-naica S.F., Jan. 21. The virtual absence of Green-throated Carib from most of LeBaron's itinerary on the e. PR Platform may be a result of Hurricane Hugo in 1989, or extended drought conditions. Dry coastal habitat favors the Antillean Mango, which may have been impacted less than its chief antagonist, the Green-throated Carib or the Antillean Crested Hummingbird. A mango seen Dec. 25 on Vieques, PR may portend some localized recovery. A Purple-throated Carib, a vagrant from the Lesser Antilles, was noted (S& CC) at Barbados Jan. 25 for perhaps only the 2nd time. A pair of Puerto Rican Woodpeckers was seen exploring holes in dead palms at Sun Bay, Vieques, PR Dec. 25 (GL). Gemmill, who conducts annual surveys of Vieques' birdlife, feared Hurricane Hugo—which devastated St. Croix, United States Virgin Islands, and Culebra with 200 mph winds in 1989—would eliminate this small resi-

dent population. A Puerto Rican Flycatcher heard at JostVanDyke, British Virgin Islands Dec. 29 (GL) was one of the few out islands records of the e. PR Platform.

An ad. ♂ **Northern Wheatear** seen at N. Point, Bd Dec. 10–11 (DA, *fide* MF) represented the 2nd record for this island. Archer (*fide* MF) suggested that its "white-tail" and size indicated the Greenland race of *leucorhoa*. A Swainson's Warbler was reportedly heard at Boqueron Bird Reserve Jan. 21 (HC), which would furnish the 2nd record from Puerto Rico. A ♂ Cape May Warbler (ph.) was present in a Coles garden, Bd from the fall through Jan. 27 for a 3rd island record (MF, LM). A N. Oriole was seen at JostVanDyke, BVI, Dec. 29 (GL) providing the first record there and perhaps only 3rd record for all the British Virgin Islands.

Addendum

Sorrie reports that the staff of Forfar Field Station, Stafford Cr., North Andros, Ba estimated that in May 1991 about 300 Am. Flamingo nested near remote Turner Sound. On July 22, 1993, 4 observers (CH, FN-G, CD, PT) observed what they believe to be Puerto Rico's, and the West Indies, first

Common Greenshank at San Jacinto mangroves near Guanica. It was compared closely with L. Yellowlegs. An ad. **Whiskered Tern** seen (MF) and photographed at Congo RD., Bd Apr. 16–23, 1994, may actually represent the 2nd occurrence, whence a juvenile obtained in 1847 was misidentified, according to MF. If that were not enough, a ship-assisted **Indian House Crow** was also observed (ph.) at Barbados, providing the first occurrence in the Neotropics (MF, EM). What a year for Barbados birders!

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A belated but highly significant report was of an adult Whiskered Tern at Barbados in April 1994. The one previous report from the West Indies, also from Barbados, has been questioned by some, but this one is unmistakably documented. Photograph/Martin Frost.